

On the Main Resources Used to Persuade Readers in Multimodal Texts Related to Health in the Local Press

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Abstract

Using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as a framework, my purpose in this paper is to describe some multimodal texts related to health published in a local newspaper in Alicante (Spain) in order to analyse the main strategies used to persuade readers and to catch their attention.

In this paper, I intend to highlight the main resources used by the newspaper to establish an interaction between the discourse used in the multimodal texts under analysis and the addressees (i.e. the readers of the newspaper). For this reason, I will pay attention to the main visual characteristics of these texts: background, layout, size of the image, frames and information value.

As a conclusion, I will point out how our society is influenced by the presence of new texts, which are clearly characterised by the increasing dominance of the visual mode. This implies that new literacies such as ‘critical media literacy’ or ‘critical literacy’ need to be developed as a way of enabling readers to develop a critical attitude to the texts they are exposed to.

1. Introduction

Any information that helps the reader to be aware of the importance of health is relevant because it can influence health care directly. For this reason, a corpus of articles related to health in the section called “Health and Beauty” of the local newspaper *20 Minutes* in Alicante (Spain) is analysed in this paper, paying attention to their main visual characteristics and taking into consideration the social aspects of language. I analysed all the texts that appeared in this section for a semester (October-December 2004), 20 texts in total, and I have chosen five texts at random to illustrate the analysis.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (hereafter SFL) will be the theoretical framework of this paper because it concentrates on the analysis of authentic products of social interaction (texts), considered in the social and cultural context in which they take place. The most generalized application of SFL is: “To understand the quality of texts: why a text means what it does, and why it is valued as it is.” (Halliday 1994 [1985]: xxix). SFL analyses the main reasons for choosing between some linguistic forms or others, which is always determined by the functions that those linguistic forms perform in society. At the same time, SFL is able to provide enhanced insight into the quality of the information related to health which we find in local newspapers because it analyses the different choices found in any text type.

This linguistic school describes a text in terms of the different choices of language that appear in a given text and of the way a text realises what is happening (ideational metafunction), how it interacts with the reader or hearer (interpersonal metafunction) and how a text coheres (textual metafunction). In Martin's words (1992: 493): "Texts are social processes and need to be analysed as manifestations of the culture they in large measure construct."

Nowadays we need to be active participants in our society. That is the reason why we need to develop a critical perspective on texts that employ a variety of modes to convey meaning. Our society is influenced by the presence of new texts, whose main characteristic is the increasing dominance of the visual mode. This implies that new literacies such as critical media literacy or critical literacy need to be developed as a way of enabling readers to develop a critical attitude towards the texts they are exposed to.

It is important to clarify what is meant by 'text' and what is meant by 'multimodal text'. A text is "a semantic unit: not of form, but of meaning" (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 1-2). A text may be spoken or written, prose or verse, a dialogue or monologue. It may be anything from a single proverb to a whole play, from a momentary cry for help to an all-day discussion on a committee. A text is a unit of language in use. It is not a grammatical unit, like a clause or sentence; and it is not defined by its size (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 1). A 'multimodal text' is a text which uses more than one mode of meaning-making, especially one in which we can observe an increased dominance of the visual mode to catch people's attention.

This paper will highlight some suitable strategies used in this kind of texts in order to attract the reader's attention, such as the importance of the visual image (interaction between image and written text), the place where known and new information appears, etc. All these strategies made the "Health and Beauty" section one of the most popular in the newspaper *20 Minutes*, as the survey carried out as part of this research showed.

When readers read any page they have certain expectations and the page should be visually designed to meet those expectations. Since the texts under analysis need to attract the reader's attention, it is expected that they promote their visual elements by using many colours, images, etc., as the analysis will point out. As Frances (2004: 124) states: "That we associate particular visual arrangements with different genres of writing means that the visual arrangements do some of the work of the genre. This means, then, that the visual arrangements can be analysed in terms of the genre work they do." This leads us to consider how the visual elements and contexts of a text contribute to our overall experience of the text because there is a very clear combination of verbal and visual meanings.

Following Halliday (1978: 27), I understand language as ‘meaning potential’ – i.e., what the speaker can do or mean – which implies that out of the different choices that are possible in language, the speaker selects the most appropriate according to the communicative situation or the functions that language has in context. The multimodal texts selected communicate through the way they select the visual forms and combine them with the written text. This combination creates a multimodal text according to the cultural conventions that surround it. Every text always exists inside a context of culture that determines the principles by which the text is created, i.e., multimodal texts in Western cultures are different to multimodal texts in Eastern cultures. Furthermore, it does not make sense to analyse each resource (music, image, language, etc.) that appears in a multimodal text independently because all these elements contribute to seeing the text as a whole.

Employing SFL as a framework will be helpful to understand why a written text is used as it is by paying attention to its context and textual organization because it enables a thorough study of the construction of meaning in the text. The analysis will reveal that the visual elements and the context of a text influence our overall experience of the text because texts have to be understood in their context since they represent the reality that surrounds them, as Kambeleris and de la Luna (2004: 241) state: “As readers, we have to be able to interpret critically the texts we interact with on a daily basis and become more analytical in our literacy practices around texts; in this way we will develop a critical literacy.”

The analysis will pay attention to the main visual characteristics used in the multimodal texts related to health (background, layout, size of the image, frames and information value) in order to convey meaning and to catch the reader’s attention.

2. Aspects related to the social function of language in multimodal texts related to health

Paying attention to the main aspects related to the social function of language will help us to understand why the said multimodal texts related are constructed as they are in the genre/field of health promotion.

2.1 Context of situation and its three variables

The corpus of articles analysed belongs to the section of the newspaper called “Health and Beauty”; more specifically all of them provide pieces of advice on how to live properly. This section appears once a week, on Wednesday, in a free newspaper called *20 Minutes*, which is

delivered every day in Alicante (Spain). The texts under analysis are authentic since they appear in the everyday life of people receiving this newspaper.

Although all the multimodal texts analysed are related to health, the field is different in all of them: advice on how to sleep well, how to avoid infections in winter, the importance of riding a bike for health and of choosing the right food to avoid heart problems.

The objective of these texts is to make readers aware of the importance of health and to give some basic ideas on how to cope with basic problems which anybody could have in this regard. The vocabulary that appears in them is obviously related to health and words such as “proteins”, “alcohol”, “heart”, “pain”, etc. are repeated in these texts.

The notion of tenor takes into consideration the social relations between the participants in the linguistic interchange because the kind of social relation affects the use we make of language: the sender is the author of the article and the addressees are the readers of the newspaper *20 Minutes*.

The register of the articles under analysis is quite informal and the reader is addressed as “you” (difference between “tú” (you in informal Spanish) and “usted” (you in formal Spanish)). Apart from this, imperatives are used because most of the written text consists of pieces of advice given to the reader. These imperatives normally introduce short sentences in which the reader is encouraged to do something in order to be healthy. Most of the processes are material processes, i.e., processes of doing, such as sleep, eat, touch, etc. There are also some questions at the beginning of the article that catch the readers’ attention after which the answers are provided in the article.

Poynton (1985) points out that we find three dimensions inside the notion of tenor, to which I shall refer briefly: the power dimension observes whether the relations between the participants are equal or not. In the case of the articles under analysis, the authors have power over the readers and the person who wrote the article tries to make the readers aware of the importance of health in their daily life.

The contact dimension makes reference to the existence, or not, of a contact relation between the participants. In this case, there is no contact but when the articles are read readers establish a relationship with the author and are conscious of his/her thoughts and his/her ideology although they are not in contact with him/her.

The affective involvement dimension refers to the extent to which the participants are emotionally involved or committed in a situation. The author is committed and this commitment is expressed by writing these articles on health.

The concept of mode makes reference to the role that language plays in the text. The mode includes the channel through which the author transmits his/her linguistic message in the texts under analysis. In the multimodal texts under analysis there are simple grammatical structures, whose main characteristics are short sentences and coordination.

3. Main visual characteristics in the multimodal texts

It is a well-known fact that certain combinations in texts help to fix the product, topic or image in the memory by actively involving the reader, for instance: colour combination, use of real pictures, frames, etc.

In the multimodal pages of the newspapers where the texts under analysis are found only the top part of the page deals with health while the rest of the page is used for advertising. This is connected with the information value of the text in which the top part is considered to be more important. The top part of the page is divided into three sections that deal with three different topics related to health. I am going to concentrate on the articles found on the left hand side of the page because of the importance of the image in them. There is a cohesive relationship between the image and the visual text due to the fact that both are clearly connected or complementary, which was pointed out in the answers readers gave in the survey.

Following Kress and van Leeuwen (2006 [1996]), we should consider three key spatial dimensions in visual texts:

- Left/right: Given/New
- Top/bottom: Ideal/Real
- Centre/margin: Centre/Peripheri

The different ways in which the elements of a multimodal text are placed affect how our attention moves over the page. The size and colour of something and the placement of elements at the top or bottom, left or right influences the way the page is perceived because there is normally a hierarchical relationship between elements. The way the page is arranged is intended to guide the reader's attention to certain parts of the text: the image/s, the written text, the heading, etc. What is found at the top of the page is given a prominent position, especially if it is in the right-hand side corner. Images normally stand out since they are what we first see.

The first thing that readers see when they look at the page is the image, which is placed in different places in the multimodal texts under analysis: top (Text 1 and 2), centre (Text 4 and 5) and right (Text 3) – see table 1 below. The written text is not very large compared to the visual image. These texts try to establish a relationship between the world they represent and the readers. The fact that the image illustrates the written text contributes to the representation of the world. Roland Barthes (1977: 40) coined the term ‘anchorage’ for cases like these in which the text helps to understand the image and vice versa.

Generally, the background of the texts is light and the image appears at the top of the multimodal text in most of the examples. The size of the image is normally big or medium size compared to the written text. There are no frames or they are not very pronounced in the texts analysed. As regards information value, it is common to find new information in the image, which adds prominence to it. The main visual characteristics applied to the analysis of each multimodal text are summarized in Table 1.

| Visual characteristics | Text 1 November 10, 2004 | Text 2 November 17, 2004 | Text 3 November 24, 2004 | Text 4 December 1, 2004 | Text 5 December 22, 2004 |
|--|--|---|---|--|---|
| Background | Light background. Not much contrast between the background of the image. | Dark background. | Light background. | Light background. | Light background. |
| Layout (placement of image on the newspaper's page and in the multimodal text) | Top of the page and top of the multimodal text. | Top of the page and top of the multimodal text, on the right-hand side. | Top of the page and on the right-hand side of the multimodal text. | Top of the page and top of the multimodal text. | Top of the page and at the bottom of the multimodal text. |
| Size of the image | Big, almost half of the multimodal text. | Big, more than half of the multimodal text. | Medium size (approximately one third of the text). | Medium size (approximately one third of the text). | Small (approximately one fifth of the text). |
| Frames | Frame: not strong. | Frame: strong. | Frame: not strong. | Frame: not strong. | Frame: not strong. |
| Information value (in the multimodal text) | Given/New: New information center. | Given/New: New information in all the picture. | Given/New: New information appears on the right-hand side of the multimodal text and on the top part. | Given/New: New information in all the picture, which appears in the center of the multimodal text. | Given/New: New information in all the picture. |

Table 1. Visual characteristics of the multimodal texts analysed.

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006 [1996]), the main visual features through which a multimodal text communicates are the following: colour, shots, layout, salience and framing. As can be observed in the different texts analysed, the elements that are accorded the most visual attention are the images. Apart from the images, the headings are also important because they stand out by their placement at the top.

Images are often used to bring a sense of immediacy and reality to the text to create a sense of interaction with the reader, as is seen in the texts under analysis. This newspaper is delivered every morning and most people reading it are in a hurry because they are on their way to work (the audience of the newspaper comprises professionals and semi-professionals, mothers with children on their way to school, housewives, etc.). For this reason, images are essential and they should have a persuasive effect on the reader. In other words, they must invite the reader to read the section related to health.

As one would expect, the heading with the name of the section is placed at the top of the page in capital letters after the date. Both are on the right-hand side, the space allocated to New information. Apart from this there is a sub-heading. Both heading and sub-heading are in blue.

The fact that paragraphs are introduced by numbers in a different colour, followed by a sentence in bold or in the same colour as the number, helps the readers to concentrate their attention and guide the reading. The letters chosen to present the written texts in these articles are big enough to be read easily. Apart from this, the colours used match well and are cohesive.

In the different articles analysed, there is a gradation in the size of the articles, the one on the left being the biggest. In this sense, salience exists because it creates a “hierarchy of importance among the elements, selecting some as more important, more worthy of attention than others” (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006 [1996]: 201).

Salience is realized through size, colour, colour contrasts, tonal contrast, placement on the page, drawing the reader’s gaze to an element of the text. Size is normally a major factor of salience. In combination with colour, the heading is usually large and stands out. The image is normally the most salient on the page because it takes up a great part of the page and seems to dominate over the written text. This contrasts with the written text blocks, which are normally in a very small font and never the most salient feature.

It is also important to take into consideration the structure of the multimodal text to see if it is balanced. Although the written text occupies more space than the visual image, in

the texts under analysis there is a good balance between the image and the written text. It is not surprising that in three of the four texts there is a picture of a woman since women normally pay more attention to health.

Colour is of great significance since it is used to attract the reader's attention. As Kress and van Leeuwen (2002: 347) make clear, the colours of the text, including clothing, are used to denote specific aspects of the person or character.

In the backgrounds, light colours establish a contrast with the colours used for the writing. In general, the colour of a background makes the written message and the image easier to see and read. Colours always suggest something: some colours make the readers comfortable and others can make them feel uncomfortable.

The backgrounds of the articles under analysis are white, which help the reader read the written text, and the letters used for the text blocks are black. The headings and sub-headings are in red and blue, two colours that match well and that can be considered cohesive. The colours of backgrounds contribute to the creation of a specific context. The selection of colours normally affects the feelings of the reader, drawing an emotional response to the text (Kress and van Leeuwen 2002: 348).

The dominance of colour background or image is designed to attract the reader's attention, which normally implies the reader's desire to engage with the text. In other words, people usually feel very much attracted by the colours. Moreover, in this kind of texts, the written text becomes part of the visual. The written text generally contrasts with the background; it is normally black or white or it links with another element on the page, for example the colour of the heading.

Headings are usually large and bold and are placed on the top of the page. Images and the written text blocks may be placed on the right-hand or left-hand side of the page or in the top or bottom. The left-hand side, the space for Given information, contains elements of less importance than those placed on the right-hand side, because they are assumed to be known by the reader. The right-hand side, the space for the New information is where the most important elements are located and where the readers should concentrate their attention (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006 [1996]: 181). Frames are another important visual feature. They are normally used to highlight the written text or an image.

In Table 2, I will answer the following questions proposed by Carter *et al.* (2001: 40) in order to analyse the content of the picture. The answers will point out that in most of the images there are women at home, which makes clear that the text composer intends women to

be the main readers. These women are in their thirties, they are all white and seem to be of a good social status; all of them look very healthy and happy.

| Questions following Carter <i>et al.</i> (2001: 40) | Text 1 November 10, 2004 | Text 2 November 17, 2004 | Text 3 November 24, 2004 | Text 4 December 1, 2004 | Text 5 December 22, 2004 |
|--|--|--|--|--|---|
| What artefacts are there in the image? | A bed. | No artefacts. | A glass and a bowl. | A bicycle. | A dish and a fork. |
| Are there any non-human beings in the picture? | No. | No (a mouth appears all over the multimodal text). | No. | No. | There is a fish at the beginning of the text. |
| What people are included? Consider genre, age, ethnicity and social class. | White woman in her thirties. Middle class. | White woman in her thirties. Middle class. | White man in his thirties. Middle class. | White woman in her thirties. Middle class. | White woman in her thirties. Middle class. |
| What is the setting? | Home. | Unknown. | Home. | In the street. | Home. |

Table 2. Questions proposed by Carter *et al.* (2001: 40) to analyse the content of the picture.

The previous questions point out the importance of cultural aspects in the texts under analysis. I asked twenty five regular readers of *20 Minutes* the following questions to see if they considered the section related to health as popular and useful:

1. Do you regularly read the section related to health in the newspaper *20 Minutes*?
2. Why do you read it?
3. Do the photographs catch your attention?
4. Do you think that the photographs chosen match with written text?
5. Are the pieces of advice offered in this section useful for your daily life?

The survey carried out with 25 people as part of this research showed that the health section was read by all of them (question 1). This made of it one of the most popular sections in the newspaper (question 2), because readers found that the pieces of advice offered in this section were very useful in relation to their wish to be healthy in their daily life (nine answers out of 25) and for other reasons such as the following: it is a short section you can read quickly (10 answers out of 25); the use of real photographs showing healthy people was

essential to catch the readers' attention because they identified with the person in the photograph (six answers out of 25).

As regards question 3, all readers said that all the images caught their attention because they represented real people who were good looking and healthy and that is how they wanted to be. Apart from this, eight people pointed out that the colours used, mainly blue and white, also affected them because these colours made them feel relaxed.

The 25 people who took part in the survey thought that there was a close relationship between the image and the written text because both elements expressed the same meaning and were cohesive (question 4). Finally, as regards question 5, the 25 readers found the information of this section useful. Nine of them pointed out that they found it very useful that the different pieces of advice proposed in the articles were introduced by numbers because this made their reading easier.

4. Conclusions

The visual elements of the texts under analysis (colours, shapes, written texts, images, etc.) are carefully chosen because they perform a persuasive function. For example, when choosing colours, the designer normally chooses bright and dark together since this mixture attracts the reader's attention. As Hyland (2000: 10) acknowledges: "Readers must be drawn in, influenced and persuaded by a text that sees the world in similar ways to them, employing accepted resources for the purpose of sharing meanings in that context."

The section analysed is one of the most popular in the journal *20 Minutes* for several reasons, as the analysis of the survey pointed out: the pieces of advice provided are very useful, there is a coherent relationship between the image and the written text, images present healthy people, the article is short and the most important part of the information is highlighted by a different colour, etc.

The visual aspects of texts are to be understood as embedded in the social context where they are used because the designer is influenced by the social circumstances in which the text is composed and he/she also considers the circumstances in which these texts will appear. Designers create the page according to what they want the reader to see first on a page, the mood that the text should create, etc. They establish a relationship between the different parts of the text that contributes to the internal coherence and cohesion.

I have used a systemic functional approach to language because of the interrelationship between language, text and the contexts in which those texts occur and because this

framework includes a social perspective in the study of language. In this analysis I have kept the following questions in mind in order to concentrate on the main aspects of the multimodal analysis: ‘What is the first thing you see when you look at the page?’, ‘Where is the image placed on the page?’, ‘What colours are used and how do they match?’, ‘Where is the written text placed and how is it in comparison to the image?’ and above all, ‘How does a multimodal text communicate, how does it establish relationships between the represented world and the reader?’

This analysis is not an end in itself because my purpose is to make people reflect on the impact the reading of a multimodal text has on the reader in terms of persuasion. My intention was to highlight the fact that the construction of multimodal texts is not random because designers choose images carefully and place them in a very precise way. Moreover, colours are also chosen carefully.

The visual image is essential in the texts analysed because, through visual images, the reader can identify with the people who appear in the picture. The texts analysed can be considered cohesive units of meaning because the visual and verbal meanings in them are intersemiotically related because there is a clear relationship between the written text and the visual. The reader perceives a sense of unity and complementarity in terms of the whole multimodal text.

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Appendix: Five multimodal texts used for the analysis

Text 1: November 10, 2004

LA BUENA VIDA

¡Quiero dormir!

CINCO TRUCOS PARA SOÑAR CON LOS ANGELITOS

Una vuelta más en la cama... y otra... y otra... Cuando el sueño se resiste a llegar acabas por levantarte sin haber descansado. No te resignes y sigue nuestros consejos para descansar mejor.



- 1 La cena, ni excesiva ni demasiado ligera.** No te vayas a dormir con el estómago lleno, ya que esto provocará que tu temperatura corporal ascienda y el nivel de azúcar en tu sangre suba, lo cual te impide dormir con facilidad. Lo ideal es que la última comida que hagas sea al menos cuatro horas antes de irte a dormir. Por el contrario, si te acuestas con hambre pasarás menos tiempo en el periodo del sueño en el que se producen ondas de baja frecuencia, que es el que más te permite recuperarte.
- 2 No te olvides de las proteínas.** Un par de horas antes de ir a la cama toma una pequeña cantidad de pescado, pollo, pavo, nueces o lácteos desnatados. Contienen triptófano, un aminoácido que ayuda a tu cuerpo a producir melatonina y serotonina, sustancias inductoras del sueño.
- 3 Cafés, sólo hasta las 15.00 horas.** La cafeína permanece en tu cuerpo un periodo comprendido entre 6 y 7 horas. Tómate el último café no más tarde de las 3 de la tarde.
- 4 Calcio y magnesio, ¡que no te falten!** El calcio tiene un ligero efecto sedante y el magnesio puede ejercer de relajante muscular suave. Toma alimentos que los contengan o suplementos nutricionales, pero asegúrate de no sobrepasar los 1.200 mg diarios de calcio ni los 400 de magnesio.
- 5 El alcohol, ni para las heridas.** Aunque el alcohol te deje adormilado, has de saber que interrumpe el sueño REM y dificulta la formación de las ondas de baja frecuencia. Si lo tomas, que sea tres horas antes de irte a la cama.

LA BUENA VIDA

Tu lengua habla por ti

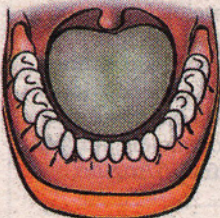
DIME DE QUÉ COLOR ESTÁ Y TE DIRÉ LO QUE TIENES

Un vistazo a la lengua puede dar mucha información de tu estado de salud. Saca tu lengua delante de un espejo, dale los buenos días y no pierdas detalle de lo que te va a contar. Éstas son las claves para entenderla:



Blanquecina y con manchas →

Una capa blanca puede indicar debilidad del sistema inmune. Si se elimina con un cepillado pero vuelve a aparecer, podría necesitar de algún antifúngico.



Grisácea → O eres un fumador empedernido o llevas muy mal la higiene de tu boca. Ve pensando en dejar de fumar en el primer caso y en ambos recurre a un buen cepillado de tus dientes tras cada comida, incluyendo unas pasadas con un rascalinguas.



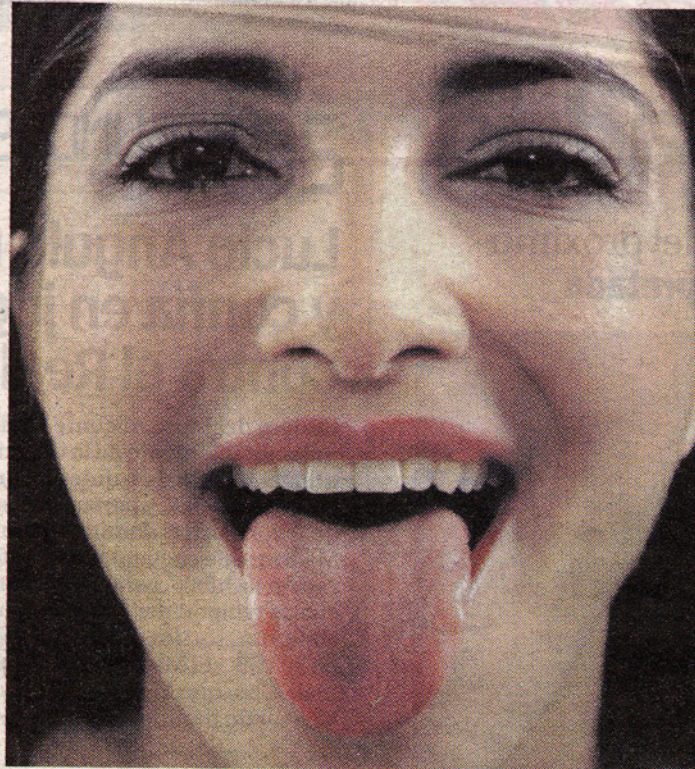
Roja y suave → Una lengua de aspecto más suave de lo normal (parece que tenga menos irregularidades), rojiza y con cierta in-

flamación puede significar falta de hierro. Además de los suplementos nutricionales pertinentes, deberías ir a visitar al doctor.

Con pequeñas úlceras → Pueden ser producidas por alguna pieza dental que tenga bordes vivos o por un herpes. No tiene por qué tener gran



importancia, pero las úlceras que duren más de tres semanas deben recibir atención médica, no lo dejes pasar.



Aleja las infecciones invernales

QUE SE CONTAGIE OTRO...

Ahora que llega el tiempo frío y se desatan infecciones por todas partes, el peligro de contraer algún virus maligno es alto. Aquí tienes unos consejos sencillos para evitarlas:

● **Agua y más agua.** Si estás bien hidratado mantendrás tus mucosas bien pegajosas y listas para atrapar cualquier invasor que quiera entrar por tu nariz o tu boca.

● **Nada de tocarse.** Y no es que seamos de la liga de puritanos incondicionales, no, lo que queremos que sepas es que cada vez que te tocas la boca, la nariz, los ojos... estás llevando los microorganismos de las manos hasta las puertas de entrada de tu organismo. Al menos pónselo difícil.

● **Lávate a menudo.** Tus manos han de estar limpias, porque sabemos que, a pesar del consejo anterior, va a haber más de una vez en la que te toques inconscientemente. Lávate con agua caliente y jabón. Puedes usar jabones antibacteriales, pero has de saber que muchas infecciones de las vías respiratorias se producen por virus que se ríen de estos jabones.

● **El móvil para ti solo.** Una de las vías más comunes de contagio es el



móvil. Déjase a alguien con gripe y tienes garantía casi segura de que al día siguiente la gripe te atacará a ti. No se os pasa ni una, ¿eh?... pues sí, lo mismo pasa con los teléfonos convencionales.

● **Kiwis y naranjas.** La vitamina C tiene un efecto muy positivo a la hora de evitar infecciones. Con medio gramo al día tendrás suficiente, pero si eres proclive a enfermarse y tus riñones están sanos puedes llegar a un gramo diario.

LA BUENA VIDA

Las bicicletas no son sólo para el verano

LA MEJOR AYUDA PARA MANTENER TU SALUD

Las viejas excusas para no montar en bicicleta ya no funcionan. Ingo Froböse, profesor de la Universidad de Colonia, ha realizado un estudio en el que demuestra que montar en bicicleta regularmente mejora la salud en todos los niveles. Los beneficios empiezan a ser notables a partir de los 20 minutos de pedaleo.

1 Directo a tu corazón. Montar de forma regular reduce el riesgo de infarto hasta en un 50%. La presión arterial disminuye y se logra reducir el nivel de colesterol LDL, o malo, a la vez que aumenta el HDL, o bueno. Es un ejercicio que mantiene las arterias flexibles y jóvenes.

2 Evita el dolor de espalda. Salvo en las bicicletas de competición, la postura normal, con el torso lige-



ramente inclinado adelante, es beneficiosa para tu espalda. La mayoría de molestias lumbares proceden de la inactividad y esta posición la hace trabajar, obligando a tus discos intervertebrales

a nutrirse y a estar en forma.

3 Mejora tus rodillas. Al no haber golpeo como en la carrera a pie o las actividades que implican saltos, con la bicicleta las rodillas funcionan pro-

tegidas, pues gran parte de tu peso va sobre el sillín y la acción del pedaleo no es traumática. Al recibir poca presión, las articulaciones reciben con facilidad los nutrientes.

4 Ahuyenta infecciones. El pedaleo moviliza las células que te protegen de infecciones, los fagocitos, que aumentan su actividad y se vuelven más activos. Ésta es la razón por la que a los enfermos de sida se les recomienda la bicicleta, explica el Dr. Froböse. Ten en cuenta que los esfuerzos moderados refuerzan tu sistema inmune, los exhaustivos lo debilitan.

5 Fuera preocupaciones. La mayor oxigenación cerebral generada por el pedaleo te permite pensar con más claridad. Tu cuerpo además genera endorfinas (las hormonas de la felicidad), sobre todo a partir de una hora de ejercicio.

LA BUENA VIDA

Dale a tu corazón lo que se merece

¿CÓMO AUMENTAR LAS DOSIS DE OMEGA-3?

Los ácidos grasos omega-3 han demostrado su papel protector en las enfermedades cardiovasculares y neurodegenerativas. Los expertos recomiendan aumentar su consumo en la alimentación, ya que, en general, en la dieta diaria no se toma la suficiente cantidad. Para hacerlo de una forma natural y sin necesidad de suplementos basta con seguir estos prácticos consejos:

- 1 Elige pescados grasos, que contienen mayor porcentaje de omega-3, como el salmón, la caballa, las anchoas, las sardinas y los arenques.



- 2 Evita los preparados de pescado congelado para freír, pues contienen grasas tipo trans, que son perjudiciales pues estropean los efectos de los omega-3.

- 3 No tomes frituras de pescado de los establecimientos de comida rápida, porque se hacen con aceites poco saludables para el corazón.

- 4 Cocina el pescado de la forma más natural posible. Al vapor, al horno, al microondas o a la plancha. Alíñalo con especias y aceite de oliva.

- 5 Si vas a freír pescado, utiliza aceite de oliva nuevo para el proceso y títalo al terminar, no lo guardes en la

aceitera. También debes reducir al máximo el tiempo de fritura para evitar la formación de grasas nocivas.

- 6 El pescado en lata debe tomarse siempre conservado en aceite de oliva, el mejor conservante de los omega-3.

- 7 Toma nueces, también contienen un tipo de omega-3 (ácido alfa linoleico) que protege el corazón.

- 8 Aficiónate a las semillas de lino, el aceite de lino contiene un 53,3% de omega-3, y las semillas crudas se pueden utilizar para tomar como pipas o para añadir a ensaladas y cereales de desayuno.

- 9 Otros productos vegetales con omega 3 son los brotes de soja (3,2%), el aceite de soja (6,8%), el aceite de colza (11,1%), el aceite de germen de trigo (6,9%) y el aceite de nuez (10,4%).

- 10 Evita los alimentos con ácidos grasos omega, como el aceite de maíz, de cártamo y de girasol, porque neutralizan el efecto protector de los omega 3.

